Arrest of misogynist influencer upheld

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Body

A court in Romania's capital, Bucharest, has upheld the 30-day arrest of divisive social media personality and self-described misogynist Andrew Tate on charges of organized crime, human trafficking and rape, an official said late Tuesday.

Ramona Bolla, a spokesperson for Romanian anti-organized crime agency DIICOT, said the court rejected an appeal by Tate against a judge's earlier decision to extend his arrest from 24 hours to 30 days.

Tate, 36, a British-U.S. citizen who has 4.5 million followers on Twitter, was initially detained on Dec. 29 for 24 hours along with his brother Tristan, who was charged in the same case.

Two Romanian women also were arrested.

The court late Tuesday rejected all four appeals against a judge's Dec. 30 decision to grant prosecutors' request to extend the arrest period. A document explaining the judge's reasoning said "the possibility of them evading investigations cannot be ignored," and that they could "leave Romania and settle in countries that do not allow extradition."

Tate and the other three defendants arrived at Bucharest's Court of Appeal in handcuffs Tuesday and were taken away in the afternoon. Eugen Vidineac, a Romanian defence lawyer representing Tate, told journalists after a morning hearing that "all four of the accused have made statements" and that "the lawyers' pleas were listened to entirely."

Tate, a former professional kick-boxer, is reported to have lived in Romania since 2017, previously was banned from various prominent social media platforms for expressing misogynistic views and hate speech. The week of his arrest, he traded insults on Twitter with teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg.

DIICOT said it had identified six victims in the trafficking case who were subjected to "acts of physical violence and mental coercion" and were sexually exploited by the members of the alleged crime group.

The agency said victims were lured by pretences of love, and later intimidated, kept under surveillance and subjected to other control tactics while being coerced into performing pornographic acts that were intended to make money for the alleged persecutors.

After the appeals court upheld the arrest warrant extension, prosecutors can now request detentions of up to 180 days for the four people charged.

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